



Grounds and Supervision Duties

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Introduction

Schools have a responsibility to ensure the safety of both staff and students, whilst controlling the workload of their staff. To assist in meeting and balance these responsibilities the following advice is provided to aid branches in working with their schools to set up a system of duty in a consultative and cooperative fashion which recognizes the different strengths and constraints each school has.

The advice is in four parts: legal requirements, current normal practises, advice from the Executive to members, examples of good practice operating in schools. It has been developed jointly with NZSPC and PPTA's senior positions advisory group.

Note: Document has also been called Non-timetabled duties: Grounds and Supervision Duties and was part of a series on How to Reduce Work Overload.

Legal requirements

There are legal requirements from several sources that the branch needs to ensure the school is meeting. These will underpin the work done by the branch to secure the best possible conditions for members and students:

1 STCA 5.1A.1 (c) Time table policy

Each school must have a policy on timetabling, developed in consultation with its teaching staff. This policy must incorporate a reference to *“other matters, including hours of duty outside of timetabled hours, which impact on timetabling practice.”*

See also PPTA advice on timetable policies and the legal meaning of “consultation”.

2 STCA 4.5.1 (b) - Part time duty hours

The STCA limits the allocation of duty to part time teachers to a maximum of one hour of duty for every nine hours of timetabled (contact and non-contact) time each week. This applies to any non-timetabled duty (meetings, parent interviews, grounds and supervision, etc).

3 Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992

The employer is obliged to provide a safe work place for all employees.

Ensuring a safe working environment includes the provision of adequate rest and meal breaks. Most schools provide two ten minute breaks and a lunch break of 30 minutes during the school day which are free from duty of any kind. *(Non-contact time is provided for specified duty and is not a replacement for rest and meal break periods.)*

Section 2 definitions:

“Harm” means illness, injury or both: and “to harm” “harmed” and “unharmed” have corresponding meanings:

“Hazard” means an activity, arrangement, circumstance, event, occurrence, phenomenon, process, situation or substance (whether arising from or caused within or outside place of work) that is an actual or potential cause or source of harm; and “hazardous” has a corresponding meaning.

Section 6(d) requires the board as the employer to take all practical steps to prevent harm to employees from the way in which work is organized, which includes duties.

Section 7 requires employers to identify significant hazards (which will cause serious harm) and hazards that can result in harm (the severity of which on any one teacher may depend upon the extent and or frequency of the exposure).

Sections 8,9,10 require the employer to identify, eliminate or isolate or minimise the hazard. Clearly, section 6 of the Act would include the way in which the teacher's work or school organisation is structured. Stress falls into the category of a hazard that can become a significant hazard.

Section 19 requires teachers to take all practicable steps to ensure their own safety and the safety of others while at work.

For teachers with certain health issues (such as diabetes) this may include ensuring that the employer is aware of the condition and that they have adequate meal and rest breaks during the school day.

Section 49 allows an employer (for example, if they fail to respond to address a notified hazard) or an employee (for example, if they fail to notify the employer of a hazard) to be penalised for a breach of the act.

Additionally, each school must have an operating Health and Safety committee, with elected representatives, trained and in place.

4 State Sector Act 1988, s. 77A

The employer is also obliged by the State Sector Act to make provision for good and safe working conditions for employees.

What is 'normal' practice for duty?

Duty and supervision practices vary from school to school. In term 4 2009 PPTA surveyed 500 teachers on their non-timetabled duties. The following summarises the key points about the amount of duty and when/where these duties are required.

Duty Quantum

There were on average two grounds/supervision duties per person per week.

These duties averaged 45 minutes in total for those who were not senior managers.

As senior managers spend more time on grounds/supervisory duty, including them raises the mean weekly duty time to 55 minutes.

The duty was representative of the year as a whole.

Duty practices

91% of teachers had grounds duty, of whom 68% were on duty alone, 28% in pairs, and 5% in groups

70% supervised students outside the school grounds, and of those

55% indicated that they supervised students outside the normal school day

Safety on Duty

13% of those with grounds duty felt unsafe at times undertaking these duties on the school grounds

87% of those who supervised students outside the school grounds felt unsafe at times undertaking these duties

Advice from PPTA Executive to members

Wherever possible, grounds and supervision duty should be the task of non-teaching staff, to leave teachers free to use the break times to build positive relationships with students¹.

When this is not the case then the following should apply:

1. Duties should generally not include areas off the school site. Exceptions may include road crossings, bus bays, or supervision concerned with EOTC, sports teams etc.
2. Duties should not extend significantly beyond times when the school is open for instruction.
3. Areas which are identified as “unsafe” by staff should be made ‘out of bounds’ to students and only overseen by duty patrol teams of 2 or more.
4. Safety equipment should be provided in order to maintain student and staff safety. This may include walkie-talkie sets, cell phones, digital cameras and weather protection gear.
5. Duties should be allocated in a way to ensure that all staff are able to take rest and meals breaks, especially those members with specific health needs.
6. Duties should be allocated in a fair, equitable and transparent fashion. This should take into account staff preferences, individual situations and the particular needs of part timers.
7. Duties should be allocated within the context of each teacher’s total workload.
8. The safety of both staff and students is paramount. Duty should be tackled in teams which do not leave staff isolated in unsafe areas.
9. No staff member should undertake a duty which they deem to be unsafe. (Advise the Branch Chair or other officers if you are told to undertake such a duty.)
10. The above advice should be incorporated into the school’s timetable policy as part of the policy statement on ‘Duty’ and the branch should as a first step identify the areas and times when members deem that duty places them at risk.

¹ There is a range of examples of good practice around the country to assist and/or replace teachers in a role which really should not need teams of highly trained professionals out in force (see section 4).

Examples of current good practice for duty

The following were identified as good practices operating in the schools of the teachers completing the 2009 duty survey.

Not using teachers for duty

- Paid grounds supervision
- Senior students/house system with lightly supervised teams of seniors supervising and acting as role models, peer supporters with back up from small teams of teaching staff
- Support staff / Teacher aides with mana (and fluoro jackets) helped by seniors
- Parents and kuia
- Maori wardens
- Community policemen visiting 'at risk' areas regularly
- Local pastors
- Community and local iwi help with bad behaviour off site – e.g. near local shops

Balancing staff roles with duties

- Duty allocated based on workloads and responsibilities within the school
- Deans do less grounds duty
- Duty rosters with clear guidelines
- Each house has a duty day and once each duty has been rostered it remains in place for the year so everyone knows weekly where and when they have to be
- The amount of duty you do is balanced against the number of contacts
- Reduced duty time
- Rotation between SMT/deans for detentions
- Shared, so the load is spread across all the teachers and SMT
- There are very few duties
- Very minimal periods of duty
- Only do one duty each per week

Allocation of duty

- An optional approach
- Staff choose their duty
- Consultation as to most suitable times
- Teachers are expected to do one duty each week, but not forced to
- Teachers choose duty teams then the team decides how to cover their area
- Teachers have a degree of input into which duty they can do

Making duty safer

- Doing duty in pairs.
- Duty is allocated to give adequate breaks.
- Non-teaching specialists used for duty or to supervise 'at risk' areas and times.

Share duties appropriately between full time/part-timers

Part timers not expected to exceed 11% of timetabled hours in all non-timetabled duties.

That is one hour of duty/meetings per week for every nine hours of paid, timetabled teaching and non-contact time.